

Washington, DC -- The House Democrats' \$1.2 trillion, 2000-page bill to "reform" health care is this week's example of "Why Washington is Broken."

The complex legislation was written in secret by a few members of Congress behind closed doors. Now it is being brought to the floor with very little opportunity for the American public to digest what is being voted on and with very limited opportunity for debate. What we do know is that the bill cuts Medicare for seniors by as much as \$500 million, raises taxes on small businesses and expands the role of government.

As part of his promise for change, President Obama pledged during the campaign to have open negotiations on health care reform. However, House and Senate Democrat leaders have met for weeks in secret negotiations that excluded the American people. The public wasn't even allowed to attend the unveiling of the bill at the capital last week.

The Bradenton Herald newspaper wrote this week that "the Democratic majority and President Obama should not cut a deal in secret. This particular public policy is too important and too far reaching, and every citizen deserves the opportunity to witness the negotiations."

I agree. That is why I introduced a "Sunshine" resolution demanding that all negotiations on a final bill be conducted in the open under the watchful eye of the American people.

Some of my colleagues have noted that the bill weighs more than 19 pounds and stands nearly nine inches tall. It could take weeks to read and even longer to fully understand.

The Washington D.C. website and newspaper Politico estimated that the bill includes about 400,000 words – or approximately \$2.24 million per word.

That estimate is based on House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's claim that the bill would cost \$894 billion and cut the deficit by \$30 billion.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi has been accused of using multi-billion dollar budgetary gimmicks to hide the true cost of the bill from the American public.

The Congressional Budget Office says that the bill would cost taxpayers \$1.055 trillion. But their estimate doesn't include the cost of closing the "donut hole" for seniors under Medicare. It also excludes an estimated \$245 billion in costs for preventing a 21 percent cut to doctor's pay under Medicare.

At a time of record deficits, the budgetary gimmicks are clearly designed to mask the full cost of the bill, which the Associated Press said this week is \$1.2 trillion.

We need an open and honest bipartisan effort to reform health care and increase transparency in Washington.